Development of a Patient Education Resource for Women With Gynecologic Cancers: Cancer Treatment and Sexual Health

Marianne Matzo, PhD, FPCN, FAAN, Catherine Graham, Cassandra L. Troup, BSN, and Betty Ferrell, RN, PhD, MA, FAAN, FPCN, CHPN

The diagnosis of gynecologic cancer has a dramatic impact on the emotional, social, and sexual domains of a woman’s life. The complexities of human sexuality are broad, particularly for people coping with life-threatening illness. Healthy sexual expression can affirm love, relieve stress and anxiety, foster hope, accentuate spirituality, and distract one from the emotional and physical sequelae of chronic illness. This article reports on the development of a sexual health education guide for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer who experienced a recurrence and were undergoing treatment. Extensive literature and the findings of this study document that patients often feel that sexuality has been ignored in their cancer care. This article provides examples of the responses from study participants and the resulting integration of those responses into the guide.

Marianne Matzo, PhD, FPCN, FAAN, is a professor in the College of Nursing at the University of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City; Catherine Graham is a transcriptionist in Oklahoma City; Cassandra L. Troup, BSN, is a palliative care research nurse in the College of Nursing at the University of Oklahoma; and Betty Ferrell, RN, PhD, MA, FAAN, FPCN, CHPN, is a professor and director of nursing research at the City of Hope National Medical Center in Duarte, CA. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the article. The article was supported, in part, by a grant from the American Cancer Society (No. 117514-PEP-09-200-01-PC). The content of this article has been reviewed by independent peer reviewers to ensure that it is balanced, objective, and free from commercial bias. No financial relationships relevant to the content of this article have been disclosed by the independent peer reviewers or editorial staff. Matzo can be reached at mmatzo@ouhsc.edu, with copy to editor at CIONEditor@ons.org. (Submitted August 2013. Revision submitted September 2013. Accepted for publication September 20, 2013.)

Key words: communication; gynecologic malignancies; quality of life; sexuality; fertility

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/14.CJON.343-348